

REMARKS

Applicant appreciates the examination of this application as evidenced by the Office Action dated July 2, 2008 (the "Action").

The specification is objected to for informalities on page 2 of the Action. Claim 2 stands rejected in the Action under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 1-4, 6-12 and 14-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,484,771 to Schulz ("Schulz"). Claims 1-12 and 14-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over DE 2838514 to Kirchkamp ("Kirchkamp").

In response, Applicant has amended Claim 1 to recite "at least one orifice formed in the at least one radially extending wall and defined by an axially extending circumferential flange." Claims 16-20 are new. Support for the above amendments and new Claims 16-20 can be found, for example, in Figures 5-12 and in Applicant's Specification, on page 8, line 10 – page 13, line 23.

Reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the amendments above and the remarks that follow.

I. The Specification

Applicant has amended the Specification above to address the objection noted on page 2 of the Action. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the objection to the Specification be withdrawn.

II. The Section 112 Rejection

The Action rejects Claim 2 under Section 112, second paragraph, and states that it is unclear how many axial walls are claimed in view of the term "at least one radially extending wall" in Claim 1. Claim 2 has been amended above to recite that the at least one radially extending wall comprises two axially spaced, radially extending walls.

Applicant submits that the recitations of Claim 2 are clear and requests that the rejection under Section 112 be withdrawn.

III. The Section 103 Rejections

Claim 1 as amended recites a gland plate comprising a rigid, annular element. The element includes:

at least one radially extending wall having a thickness of from about 0.1 to 4mm; and

at least one orifice formed in the at least one radially extending wall and defined by an axially extending circumferential flange.

Independent Claims 14 and 15 recite analogous recitations as those emphasized above with respect to Claim 1. Figure 5 (which illustrates an orifice in the radially extending wall and defined by an axially extending circumferential flange) of the current application is reproduced below. In this configuration, strengthening is provided directly around the orifice.

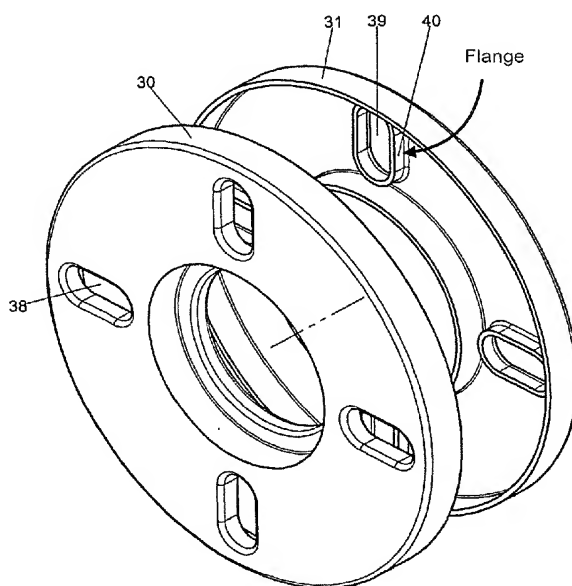


Fig. 5

Applicant submits that neither Shultz nor Kirchkamp discloses or renders obvious an orifice formed in the at least one radially extending wall and defined by an axially extending circumferential flange as recited in Claim 1. For example, walls such as elements 6, 7b and

7c in Schulz are annular to the entire gland, rather than around an orifice formed in a radially extending wall. *See* Figures 1 and 2 of Shultz, reproduced below. Applicant submits that this feature is also not disclosed by the plate elements 1, 2 or 9 of Kirchkamp as shown in Figure 2 (cited in the Action). *See* Figure 2 of Kirchkamp, also reproduced below.

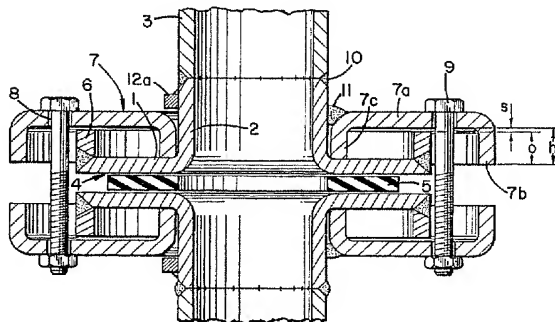


FIG. 1

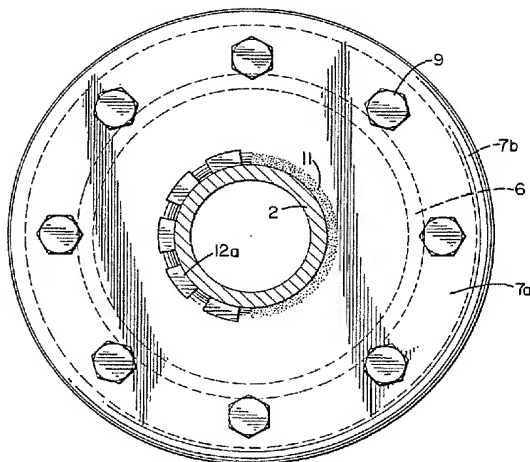


FIG. 2

Schulz

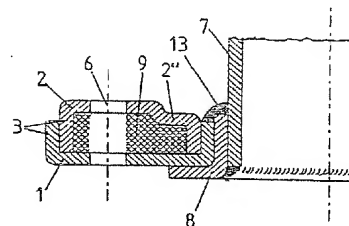


Fig. 2

Kirchkamp

For at least the above reasons, Applicant submits that independent Claims 1, 14 and 15 are patentable over Schulz and Kirchkamp. Claims 2-12 depend from Claim 1 and are patentable at least per the patentability of Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the rejection of Claims 1-12 and 14-15 be withdrawn.

III. New Claims 16-20

Claims 16-20 are new. Claims 16-20 depend from Claim 1 and are patentable at least per the patentability of Claim 1 discussed above. In addition, Applicant submits that Claims 16-20 recite various additional features that are separately patentable over the cited art.

For example, Claim 16 recites that the element includes the following:

an annular first component having a radially extending wall with a thickness of from about 0.1 to 4mm, an axially extending inner circumferential wall, an axially extending outer circumferential wall and at least one orifice, wherein the at least one orifice is formed in the radially extending wall of the first component and defined by an axially extending circumferential flange;

a corresponding annular second component having a radially extending wall with a thickness of from about 0.1 to 4mm, an axially extending inner circumferential wall, an axially extending outer circumferential wall and at least one orifice, wherein the at least one orifice is formed in the radially extending wall of the second component and defined by an axially extending circumferential flange;

wherein, when the respective inner circumferential walls and respective outer circumferential walls of the first and second components are brought into juxtaposition and held in engagement to form a hollow, annular structure, the respective orifices of the first and second components are aligned to form at least one bolt hole and the respective circumferential flanges of the first and second components abut.

Claim 17 depends from Claim 16 and recites that the inner and outer walls of the first and second components are held in engagement by crimping, adhering, chemically bonding and/or welding the walls together. Claim 18 depends from Claim 16 and further recites that the circumferential flanges include an end face such that the end faces of the respective circumferential flanges abut. Claim 19 depends from Claim 16 and further recites a means for feeding fluid through the gland plate. Claim 20 depends from Claim 19 and recites that the means for feeding fluid includes a sealed orifice formed in the inner circumferential wall, a sealed orifice formed in the outer circumferential wall and a pipe arranged within the hollow, annular structure and extending between the sealed orifices in the inner and outer circumferential walls.

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Applicant submits that these features are not disclosed or rendered obvious by the cited art, and therefore, an indication of the patentability of Claims 16-20 is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance and the same is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner have any matters outstanding of resolution, he is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at 919-854-1400 for expeditious handling.

Respectfully submitted,

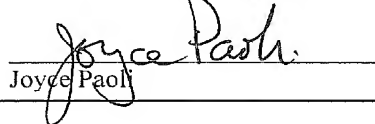


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Joyce Paoli